

State fines 12 Hilton Head employers

► Investigators find 25 child labor violations in three-day sweep of island.

By Frank Morris
Carolina Morning News

A random check of child labor practices at 30 Hilton Head Island businesses found 12 of them in violation of state laws designed to protect minors, a state Labor Department official said Wednesday.

A department task force found 25 violations during a sweep on July 30, 31 and Aug. 1. The employers are being fined a total of \$12,050, and the penalty notices probably will go out in today's mail, said Mark Dorman, assistant administrator of the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

The charges involve 19 minors ranging in age from 14 to 17. Many of the violations were found in restaurants.

"Everyone needs to take these child labor violations seriously, because we're talking about people 17 or younger," Dorman said.

"When you've got a kid on an occupational job like a meat slicer or roofing, he could cut his hand or break his leg," he said. "That's what we're doing here — making sure everybody's safe for the well-being of the kid."

All but three of the violations involved 14- and 15-year-olds working later than allowed, cooking, or going into walk-in coolers.

The cooking prohibition is to keep minors from getting burned. And working past 9 p.m. is not good for juveniles, Dorman said.

Many of the employers contacted Wednesday protested the citations, saying they were being wrongly accused of running "sweatshops."

Most said they were unaware of the requirements and would have followed them if the Labor Department had given them copies.

More than half of the violations — 14 — were for having 14- and 15-year-olds work past 9 p.m. The law prohibits having children that age working those hours during summer break from school, Dorman said.

The department also is issuing:

- Five citations for having 14- and 15-year-olds cook.
- Three citations for 14- and 15-year-olds working in walk-in coolers.
- Two citations for letting 17-year-olds use meat slicers.
- One citation for a 16-year-old working on a roofing operation.

The violations involving the 16- and 17-year-olds broke the law's prohibition

Employer Violation Fine

- Sbarro Italian Eatery, The Mall at Shelter Cove. Four 15-year-olds working in a walk-in cooler. Three 15-year-olds cooking and also working past 9 p.m. \$7,900.

- Ice Creams and Coffee Beans, Sea Pines Center. 15-year-old working past 9 p.m. 17-year-old operating a meat slicer. \$650.

- Pope John's Pizza, Palmetto Bay Road. 15-year-old cooking and also working past 9 p.m. \$650.

- Edible Pursuits, Port Royal Plaza. 17-year-old operating a meat slicer. \$500.

- Lipscomb Construction Co., Loomis Ferry Road. 16-year-old working on a roof. \$500.

- Vic's Port Royal Cafe, Port Royal Plaza. 15-year-old cooking. \$500.

- Marquee Cinemas, Main Street and Park Plaza. 14-year-old and 15-year-old working past 9 p.m. \$300.

- Northridge Cinema 10, Northridge. Two 15-year-olds working past 9 p.m. \$300.

- Pirate's Island Adventure Golf, William Hilton Parkway. 14-year-old and 15-year-old working past 9 p.m. \$300.

- Giuseppe's Pizza, Sea Pines Center. 15-year-old working past 9 p.m. \$150.

- Legendary Golf, Pope Avenue. 14-year-old working past 9 p.m. \$150.

- Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers, The Village at Wexford. 15-year-old working past 9 p.m. \$150.

against letting them do work declared as a hazardous occupation by the U.S. secretary of labor, Dorman said.

The employer hit the hardest was Sbarro Italian Eatery in The Mall at Shelter Cove, which faces fines of \$7,900 for 10 violations involving four 15-year-olds.

The penalty against the New York-based company was doubled because it has more than 100 employees in South Carolina, said Dorman, one of five task force members who made the investigation.

He said a manager at Sbarro told investigators that the only reason a short, 15-year-old girl wasn't cooking was because "she couldn't reach to pull the door down to put the pizzas in the oven."

Rick Dimple, a new manager at Sbarro, said Wednesday he was in the process of moving to Hilton Head when the violations occurred, so "I don't know exactly what the situation is."

Sbarro was cited for having four minors working in a walk-in cooler, and having three minors cooking and working past 9 p.m.



John Higgins of Hilton Head Island serves drive-through customers at Wendy's restaurant in the Village at Wexford on Wednesday. The restaurant was fined for letting Higgins, 15, work later than the law allows.

Work rules for minors

Under age 14:
Generally, state law forbids children under 14 from working, though exceptions are made for show business, certain farm jobs and for children working at businesses owned by their parents. At any age, minors may deliver newspapers to consumers.

Age 14 and 15:
Children age 14 and 15 may work in office, clerical and sales jobs, and at a number of jobs in retail, food service and gasoline service establishments. But they may not work during school hours, before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. (9 p.m. during summer break), more than 18 hours during school weeks, more than three hours on school days, more than 40 hours in non-school weeks, more than eight hours on non-school days.

They may not work in warehousing and storage; car repair; public utility duties; work involving the use of ladders or scaffolding; work involving food preparation or the use of grinders; or the operation of lawn mowers and golf carts.

Age 16 and 17:
Minors age 16 and older may work as many daily and weekly hours as the job responsibilities require or the employer requests but may not engage in any occupation deemed hazardous, as defined under the 17 Hazardous Occupations Orders of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Included on that list are driving a motor vehicle and being an outside helper; logging and sawmill work; power-driven woodworking machines, hoisting apparatus, metal forming machines, bakery machines, paper products machines and circular saws, band saws and guillotine shears; manufacturing brick, tile and related products; wrecking, demolition and ship-breaking operations; roofing operations; excavation operations.

For more information, contact the Office of Labor Services, S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, P.O. Box 11329, Columbia, S.C., 29211-1329, (803) 737-9220 or (803) 734-9903.

Parris Island suicide is blamed on rifle test

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A top Marine recruit's failure to qualify with his rifle apparently led to his suicide last Aug. 27 on the range at Parris Island, according to a Marine Corps report.

In the hours before his death, Jeremy Jenkins told other recruits that he might kill himself if he flunked. And in the preceding days, Jenkins' rifle coach ridiculed him for his shooting during boot camp, calling him "stupid" and a "loser," the internal Marine Corps report said.

A Marine general concluded the most likely reason that Jenkins, the president of the 1997 Louisville Butler Traditional High School senior class, committed suicide was that he failed to qualify with the rifle.

That could have cost him the platoon-guide position he had won as a top recruit.

"This may well have been the first time in his life he failed to accomplish anything," wrote J.R. Battaglini, commanding general of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island.

"After reviewing the evidence, I believe that the prospect of losing his status as the best recruit in his platoon was so devastating that Pvt. Jenkins decided to end his life if he failed to qualify with the rifle."

His mother, Ruth Spencer, who was hand-delivered a copy of the report, said in an interview this week she still does not think Jeremy, her only child, killed himself.

Before his death, Jenkins asked one recruit if the bullets they were using were the kind that killed people, said the June 18 report, which The Courier-Journal obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

Jenkins told another recruit to let him know his score on his next-to-last shot, so that if he failed to qualify he could save the final round for himself, the report says.

The report says recruits told investigators that Jenkins' rifle coach, Lance Cpl. R.T. Kenner, ridiculed Jenkins during rifle training. Maj. Rick Long, a Marine Corps spokesman, said Kenner's comments were grounds for discipline.

"Positive leadership is stressed on the rifle range," Long said.

Kenner, who denied making the comments when questioned, completed his enlistment March 13, before the investigation ended, so there was no discipline imposed, Long said.

Capt. Jason C. Luenz, the investigating officer, concluded that Kenner's statements were not to blame but that Jenkins' failure to qualify with his rifle and the stress that he felt leading his platoon were the most likely causes.

Jenkins had wanted to be a Marine since he was 8 years old, according to his own handwritten statement included in the report. He turned down an academic scholarship to the University of Kentucky to join the Marines.

After failing on qualifying day, the report said, Jenkins grabbed the barrel of another Marine's weapon and put it in his mouth. The Marine pulled the rifle away and a shot went off.

Jenkins then put the barrel in his mouth again and two shots went off in his mouth.

A separate investigation by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service determined there was no criminal wrongdoing, Long said.

Jenkins' mother said she has not asked for any further review of her son's death.

"That's not going to bring him back," she said. "I feel like the Lord will take care of it. He sees all where we don't see."

Jasper County planning for a new jail by 2001

► Current facility needs \$10,000 in repairs to remain operational until replacement is ready.

By Glenn Monic
Carolina Morning News

RIDGELAND — Jasper County officials are optimistic that a new jail will be built by the year 2001.

In the meantime, they're working to keep the current facility operational.

"There are eight things that we have to address at a cost of about \$10,000 which should extend the life of the jail until we can build a new one," County Administrator Henry Moss said.

Most of the money will be used to equip the current jail with a new intercom system, which state Department of Corrections officials said should be a top priority.

Moss said the county plans to lease-purchase an intercom system that could be used in other buildings once the new jail is built.

The Corrections Department identified a list of shortcomings at the jail, and gave the county an Aug. 10 deadline to address them.

In response, county officials wrote the state Monday, detailing plans to have a new jail in 30 months and also saying how current problems will be addressed.

County Council agreed last year to spend up to \$5 million on a new 100-bed, 35,000-square-foot facility. A similar jail was recently completed in Marion County at a cost of \$3.6 million.

An exact location for the new jail hasn't yet been identified, Moss said recently.

Neither has the exact funding source. The county could spend about \$3 million on a new jail without holding a referendum, because state law permits counties to borrow up to 8 percent of their assessed value without asking voters. As for the rest of the money, Moss said he is trying to secure grants and explore other options.

"I have been in contact with federal corrections officials about funding, assistance and the U.S. Marshal's Office about leasing space at the new jail," Moss said. "We will do whatever we can to make this work."

Jasper County reporter Glenn Monic can be reached at 803-537-5255, ext. 112.

What's in the water?

► Jasper County officials order more testing due to the increase in fishing and recreational use.

By Glenn Monic
Carolina Morning News

RIDGELAND — How safe is the water in the Savannah River?

Pretty safe according to Van Seiner, president of Cardinal Engineering, who at the Jasper County's request, has reviewed all tests that the Environmental Protection Agency has done on the Savannah River.

Seiner said Thursday that preliminary studies found several types of pollutants, but that the river is in good condition.

"We didn't find anything that is of any immediate concern. The river is as safe as any other water

out there," Seiner said. "There were some traces of modern day pesticides that we need to take a closer look at. We found low amounts of DDT's which are a major concern to shellfish because they are filter feeders and it never leaves their body. But the amounts were surprisingly low."

Danny McKenzie, council's Hardeeville representative, requested the testing because of increasing use of the county's three most popular boat landings — Millstone, Purrysburg and Stokes Bluff.

"There is a large amount of fishing being done on the river, especially since we improved Millstone Landing," he said. "I want to know if those fish are safe to eat."

He said several people have asked him about river quality, since more and more people seem to be using it.

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